

Southwest Area Mobilization Guide

Chapter 10 - Authority, Policy, and Scope of Operation

11 Purpose and Authority

The **Southwest Area Mobilization Guide** is a supplement to the National Mobilization Guide. In addition, it is an extension of Agency Manual/Handbook Systems, Directives and Memorandums relating to logistical support operations to provide policies, procedures, and organization; a directory and catalog of personnel, equipment, aircraft, and supplies to assist in obtaining timely and cost-effective incident support services.

Authority for the coordination of fire management activities between Federal and State agencies in the Southwest Area is outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding for Formation of the Southwest Fire Management Board.

The geographical boundaries for the Southwest Area include the States of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas and Oklahoma eastward to the 100th meridian. Federal and State Land Management agencies within the States of Arizona and New Mexico make up the primary participants in wildland fire management in the Southwest Area. See Exhibit 2.

12 Southwest Area Dispatch/Coordination System

Definition, roles, and responsibilities of the Southwest Area Coordination Center (SWCC), zone coordination centers, and unit dispatch centers were established in June 1986 by an interagency task force. This study defined uniform roles and responsibilities and the dispatch/logistical coordination system for a National multi-level dispatch/coordination organization. Specific roles and responsibilities of SWCC have been developed and identified, based on national definitions. The roles and responsibilities of zone coordination centers and unit dispatch centers have also been specifically identified in order to fully understand the dispatch/coordination system for the Southwest Area.

12.1 SCOPE OF OPERATION. The Southwest Area (SWA) wildland fire management agencies are obligated through Departmental policy and interagency agreements to respond primarily to wildfire emergencies, but are also capable of response and support for other emergency incidents, i.e., floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc. The management policies for all agencies also require that agreements be pursued with cooperators at all levels "...to facilitate efficient fire management activities within and adjacent to the agency." A cost-effective sharing of resources among public agencies is expected by the taxpaying public and the agencies fully support this concept.

In order to meet these obligations, managers must support the development and maintenance of fire skills in their personnel. Managers are expected to maintain and make available those employees with wildland fire skills. The investment in training and experience in these emergency personnel increases with time, as does their managerial ability, making their continued participation an investment in good management.

Mobilizations may involve only a few key skilled individuals or several hundred employees. Responsiveness is essential in either case. Available personnel requested by dispatchers shall be released without delay to satisfy the emergency needs.

In exceptional circumstances, such as multiple geographic area mobilizations, large numbers of qualified personnel are needed, and the resultant impact on normal operations will be great. We recognize the full implications of such actions, but it must be remembered that no agency stands alone. While we may contribute in a given instance, we may be the recipient the next time.

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12.2 SOUTHWEST COORDINATING GROUP (SWCG). The mission of the SWCG is to enhance the safety, efficiency and effectiveness of interagency fire management activities, and response and support of non-fire emergencies. This is accomplished through interpretation of agency policy, providing direction to the Zone Management Groups and the Southwest Coordination Center (SWCC) for cooperative fire management activities, developing information exchange between agencies, and monitoring and evaluating the performance of the Zone Coordination Center and SWCC. The Southwest Coordinating Group (SWCG) consists of Fire Directors or their representatives from the USDI Bureau of Indian Affairs, USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDI National Park Service, USDI Fish & Wildlife Service, USDA Forest Service, and the States of Arizona and New Mexico. Roles and responsibilities of the SWCG, SWCC, Zone Management Board, and Zone Coordination Center are included in the Southwest Coordinating Group Handbook.

12.3 SOUTHWEST AREA DISPATCH ORGANIZATION. The principal mission of the Southwest Area dispatch organization is the timely and cost-effective coordination and dispatching of resources to any incident within or outside of the Southwest Area. The dispatch organization in the SWA is delineated into Zones, with the Zone Coordination Center as the focal point for mobilization/demobilization.

ARIZONA ZONES

Central West Zone, Prescott, AZ
Flagstaff Zone, Flagstaff, AZ
Grand Canyon Zone, Williams, AZ
Southeast Zone, Tucson, AZ
White Mountain Zone, Springerville, AZ
Arizona Interagency Fire Center, Phoenix, AZ

NEW MEXICO ZONES

Albuquerque Zone, Albuquerque, NM
Gila-Las Cruces Zone, Silver City, NM
Lincoln Zone, Alamogordo, NM
Santa Fe Zone, Santa Fe, NM
Taos Zone, Taos, NM

12.4 SOUTHWEST COORDINATION CENTER (SWCC). The Southwest Coordination Center (SWCC) is the focal point for providing direction and assistance in the mobilization and demobilization of resources between zones within the Southwest Area and, as necessary, the National Coordination Center (NICC). SWCC requests support from the National Coordination Center when area resources are unavailable or committed.

12.5 TOTAL MOBILITY. Positioning and utilizing resources to meet anticipated and existing incident, preparedness, severity, wildland and prescribed fire needs regardless of geographic location or agency affiliation.

12.6 PRIORITIES. When competition for resources between zones occurs, the Southwest Multi-Agency Coordination Group (MAC) will establish priorities.

- a. When requested, zones will establish priorities for their incidents and wildland fires and report them to SWCC.
- b. The standard criteria to be used in establishing priorities is:
 1. Potential to destroy:
 - A. Human life.
 - B. Property and Resource Values (describe type and value)
Descriptions should include information that accurately measures the value, benefit, or significance of the property or resource. How is the property or resource used and by whom? Is there cultural, historical, or legislated significance?
 2. Briefly describe social/political, economic consequences.
 3. Resistance to control:
 - A. Growth potential.
 - B. Difficulty of terrain.

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4. Describe the probability of meeting wildland fire objectives within the specified time frame documented in the Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSa).
- c. Prescribed fire, wildland fire use, and wildland fire will receive the same consideration when it comes to actual decisions on the assignment of resources.

12.7 CONTINGENCY RESOURCES. Contingency resources are additional resources that may be needed to maintain a planned prescribed fire within prescription parameters, and/or quickly implement suppression alternatives if the prescribed fire exceeds those parameters.

13 Initial Attack and Resource Ordering

13.1 INITIAL ATTACK DEFINITION. Initial Attack is the first action taken to suppress a wildland fire. Subsequent supporting actions may be required. Initial attack involving the commitment of resources across recognized dispatch boundaries must comply with the following guidelines:

- a. During the initial response to an incident, a zone may utilize the closest resources in an adjacent zone.
- b. Dispatch Centers/Zone Centers will ensure that all assigned resources will know the name of the Incident Commander on the incident the resource is assigned to.
- c. At the time it becomes evident the incident will not be contained during the initial response, resources involved will be formally ordered through established dispatching channels.

13.2 BLM DIRECT EXCHANGE OF RESOURCES. Direct exchange of resources is made between BLM districts in Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah. Response areas vary but will involve resources that are in close proximity to the incident. The BLM sending units are responsible for notifying the next higher dispatch level of resource commitments as soon as possible after dispatch. If resources are to be retained beyond 24 hours after commitment, resources involved will be formally ordered through established dispatching channels.

13.3 BIA DIRECT EXCHANGE OF RESOURCES. The BIA Director, National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) is delegated authority for the assignment and movement of Bureau personnel and equipment to meet fire emergency needs and is authorized to approve expenditures chargeable to emergency fire suppression and rehabilitation funds.

The BIA Area Directors for Western Region (Phoenix), Navajo Region, and Southwestern Region (Albuquerque) have delegated authority to transfer personnel and equipment to reservations where the fire load is temporarily excessive for the local personnel.

The Western, Navajo, and Southwestern Regions encompass New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and Colorado. The movement of resources to meet agency needs should flow from the area office to agency, where resource orders will be initiated and processed through normal channels.

13.4 NPS DISPATCHING PROCEDURES. Dispatch of individual park suppression personnel and equipment to locations out of the initial attack area will be through the appropriate Zone Coordination Center in response to specific resource orders. On rare occasions, the NPS Regional FMO may request the dispatch of resources directly through a park. In these instances the FMO will be responsible for notifying the appropriate Zone Coordination Center of the movement of NPS resources. Parks are to refuse a dispatch request which comes from any other source.

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13.5 ARIZONA STATE LAND DEPARTMENT (ASLD) RESOURCE ORDERING. Due to the ASLD's legal authority for dispatching of wildfires and/or other "All Risk" incidents across the entire State, it is necessary for all extended attack incidents to flow directly to and from SWCC. All initial attack incidents will follow the Zone procedures and "good neighbor" policy.

13.6 RESOURCE ORDER. A document which details the request and release of wildland firefighting resources. Mobilized and demobilized resources, as well as the course of action taken, are documented on the same resource order. See Section 28.1 for resource order form.

13.7 RESOURCE ORDERING AND STATUS SYSTEM (ROSS). ROSS is a computer software program developed to automate the ordering, status, and reporting process. It will be used for all resource ordering (i.e. mobilization and demobilization) in the Southwest Area for any incident that exceeds initial attack. Additional information on ROSS can be found on the Internet at <http://ross.nwcg.gov>.

13.8 UNIT IDENTIFIERS. For Southwest Area, see Exhibit 1. For National Unit Identifiers, see NFES 2080.

13.9 NOTIFICATION OF COMMITMENT OF NATIONAL AND AREA RESOURCES. All agencies will notify the Zone Coordination Center when national and area resources are committed. The Zone Coordination Center will transmit an **URGENT** message via the Dispatch Messaging System (DMS). **This message will include incident name, legal location and resource identification.** National and area resources include lead planes, helicopters, airtankers, Type I crews, smokejumpers, and teams.

The Zone Coordination Center will also transmit via the Dispatch Messaging System (DMS) mailing list when these resources are released from an incident and are again available for assignment.

13.10 FILL OR KILL PROCEDURE. NICC requires confirmation within 1 hour that the Southwest Area can furnish requested resources in the time frame as listed on the order. After receipt of a resource order, all zones must confirm with SWCC within 30 minutes that they can fill items within the allowable time frames or notify SWCC they expect to be able to fill the order, requesting additional time as needed. SWCC must notify NICC within the time frame of progress of order and request additional time if it is felt the order can be filled. NICC personnel will call SWCC 1 hour after the order is placed if they have not been notified that the order is filled.

14 Definitions and Positions

a. Area. A defined geographic section of land involving large jurisdictional administrative units such as regions or states.

b. Area Coordination Center. An Area Coordination Center is set up to support all agencies within the Area. Responsible for coordinating the mobilization/demobilization of firefighting resources between Zones and the National Coordination System.

c. Expanded Dispatch. When a situation complexity develops to a point where it is necessary to separate dispatch functions, i.e., initial attack and extended support, dispatchers will be assigned to handle requests for aircraft, overhead, crews, equipment and supplies as needed. The addition of a service/support center may be required at the area, zone, and unit dispatch centers to support the increased volume of business. The timely expansion at the dispatch center is essential so effective initial attack dispatch actions are continued.

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d. Interagency Coordinating Group. An Interagency Coordinating Group has been established for each interagency center (Area and Zone). The membership of each group will consist of fire managers at each appropriate level.

1. Southwest Area Coordinating Group members are representatives from the FS Regional Office, BIA Area Offices, BLM State Offices, NPS Regional Office, FWS Regional Office, and State Forestry State Offices.

2. Zone Coordinating Group members are representatives, as applicable, from the National Forests, BIA Agencies, BLM Districts, NPS Parks/Monuments, Wildlife Refuges, and State Forestry Districts within the respective zone.

e. Service Center. A service center is a support center established for expanded dispatch. The service center provides services such as Buying Unit Teams, ground support, staging area(s), among other services.

f. Southwest Coordination Center (SWCC). The Area Coordination Center established for the Southwest Area.

g. Support Dispatcher - Expanded Dispatch. Responsible for the processing of dispatch requests for crews, overhead, aircraft, equipment, and supplies. Working assistant to Supervisory Dispatcher (at any level).

h. Supervisory Dispatcher - Expanded Dispatch. Responsible for the mobilization, reassignment, and demobilization of resources between home units and incidents. Supervises Support Dispatcher and Dispatch Recorder in a specific area within an expanded dispatch organization.

i. SWCC Center Director. Responsible for the management and administration of all activities and services relating to the operation of the Southwest Coordination Center. Receives general direction from Southwest Fire Management Board.

j. SWCC Coordinator-On-Duty (COD). Responsible to the SWCC Center Director for operations, planning, and administration of center activities and services relating to the operation of the Southwest Area Coordination Center.

k. SWCC Duty Officer. During expanded dispatch operations, a ranking agency representative may be designated as Duty Officer to the Southwest Coordination Center. Primary responsibilities of the duty officer during expanded dispatch operations is to provide an immediate contact for Agency Fire Managers and be available to the SWCC Center Director or SWCC Coordinator-On-Duty to handle or assist in matters relating to performance, injuries, accidents, etc, as requested.

l. SWCC Predictive Services. Organizational concept incorporated at the Geographical Coordination Center and National Coordination Center, combining personnel from the Fire Intelligence Section, Fire Weather Program, and Fire Behavior Center.

m. SWCC Predictive Services Group Leader. Manages, on a year round basis, the Predictive Services Group and staff. Is responsible for long-range and short-range fire weather/fire danger products, RAWs coordination, and validation of fire weather products.

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n. SWCC Intelligence Coordinator. Manages, on a year-round basis, the intelligence section and its support services staff. Is responsible for, among others, the situation reporting program, incident status summaries, fuels data, resource status reports, fire activity outlooks, and the SWA Wildland Fire Operations Web site.

o. SWCC Intelligence Assistant. Full assistant to the SWCC Intelligence Coordinator. Shares with the SWCC Intelligence Coordinator in the operation of the intelligence section.

p. SWCC Fire Information Coordinator. Manages, on a year-round basis, the information desk, staffing it directly or supervising IIOs detailing in to work the Information Desk as the fire season progresses.

q. SWCC Information Desk. The Information Desk is seasonally staffed from March to August. An incident information officer (IIO) is ordered in to SWCC on a detail basis as the fire season progresses. The IIO is qualified at the Type 1 or Type 2 level and works with the SWCC, Zone Coordination Centers, and SWA Incident Management Teams to gather information. Primary duties include providing information on wildland, prescribed, and fire use fires to the news media and the general public via news releases, the Internet, and the telephone. In addition, the IIO updates the Fire Information page on the SWA Wildland Fire Operations Website and responds to e-mail received via the Website.

r. Unit. A defined geographic section of real estate with initial attack and large fire support responsibilities such as National Forests, BIA Agencies, National Parks or Monuments, Wildlife Refuges, BLM or State Districts.

s. Unit Dispatch Center. An office with authority to assign resources to an incident on a single unit or sub-unit. The Unit Dispatch Center has responsibility for initial attack and project fire support for the local unit. A Unit Dispatch Center requests support from the Zone Dispatch Center when resources within its Unit are unavailable or exhausted.

t. Zone. A defined geographic section of real estate based on logical sources of firefighting resources and transportation.

u. Zone Coordination Center. An office responsible for coordinating the movement of resources between units within a zone. The Zone Coordination Center may have initial attack authority on Units within its sphere of influence, as agreed to by cooperating agencies. A Zone Coordination Center has the responsibility for providing project fire support to units within its designated zone, and to request support from the Area Coordination Center when resources within the Zone are unavailable or exhausted.

v. Zone Center Manager. Responsible for the management and administration of all activities and services relating to the operation of the Zone Coordination Center. During day-to-day operations, receives general supervision and broad direction from the Zone Board.

w. Zone Duty Officer. Zone Duty Officer responsibilities will be identified in the zone operation plan.

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**Exhibit 1. Southwest Area Logistical Chart
(Dispatch Channels)**

